

December 1, 2017

Staff and Local School Council
South Loop Elementary
1212 South Plymouth Court

Re: Proposed Reassignment Boundary Change of National Teachers Academy

Dear Staff and Local School Council Members:

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is committed to providing every child from every community with a high quality education that prepares them for success in college and in life. CPS students continue to make record-breaking academic progress in every part of the city. Our vision is that all CPS schools can build on this progress by offering high quality, rigorous instruction from talented educators that help put Chicago students on a path to lasting success.

In May 2017, in response to community requests to strengthen educational options in the Near South area, CPS introduced a preliminary framework to expand high quality neighborhood options from Pre-K through high school in the Near South area by expanding the boundaries of South Loop Elementary School and converting National Teachers Academy (NTA) to a neighborhood high school over time. This preliminary framework was designed to deliver on key priorities in the Near South community, including providing a continuum of high quality neighborhood school options for all students from pre-K through high school graduation, as well as building diverse school communities.

Two key components include:

- With a new facility under construction to relieve overcrowding at South Loop Elementary School, CPS is proposing expanding South Loop's boundaries south to include the entire National Teachers Academy's boundary. This will increase access to this new, state-of-the-art school facility and create one of the most racially and economically diverse schools in the city.
- Additionally, gradually converting NTA to a neighborhood high school seeks to increase high quality, neighborhood high school seats in the Near South area. Current high school students in the Near South area have very few nearby high school options. Currently, only 8 percent of high school students in the Near South area attend their neighborhood high school and, as a result, 57 percent of high school students in the Near South area travel more than three miles to attend high school.

CPS held three community meetings in May and June of 2017 to discuss this preliminary framework and gather community input. CPS collected additional input by conducting numerous small group meetings with various stakeholders in the Near South community, collecting hundreds of e-mails at transitions@cps.edu and hearing more feedback at various CPS Board of Education meetings. Throughout this process, we have heard from numerous parties in support of the preliminary framework, including public officials, community leaders and members of school communities in the Near South area.

In addition, we have heard dissent from important groups of families, and have worked to adjust our initial framework to accommodate their concerns and needs. Based on additional input from community members, CPS adjusted its initial framework to draft a more gradual conversion timeline for NTA students so that the vast majority of existing NTA students could continue their academic careers at NTA as the high school expands. Additionally, CPS also adjusted its proposal so that South Loop's boundary will expand further south than 22nd street, to incorporate the entirety of NTA's current boundary. The new expanded South Loop Elementary boundary can be found on page 3 of the transition plan, and a high school boundary will be determined in coming weeks. Moving forward, we will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure that all children receive the best possible education from Pre-K through high school graduation.

At the community's request, CPS also intends to launch an equity analysis to ensure that all students would be treated equitably in the transition and the years to come. CPS has budgeted roughly \$85,000 for a third party study.

Because of the support from various stakeholders in the Near South community, I am proposing the re-assignment boundary change of National Teachers Academy over time. As part of this proposal, students living in the current NTA boundary will be zoned to South Loop Elementary School, with certain grades being phased into the South Loop boundary over time (see attached transition plan for details).

If this proposal is approved by the Board of Education of the City of Chicago (Board), NTA will begin its transition into a high school starting in fall of 2019. In the fall of 2019, NTA students in grades 3 and below will be transferred to South Loop Elementary School. These students will also have the option to transfer to a different elementary school, including their neighborhood elementary school. The RGC program for grades K-3 will re-locate to South Loop and phase in grades over time. In addition, the pre-K program currently at NTA will relocate to South Loop. In the fall of 2019, NTA students in grades 4 and above will have the option to either remain at NTA through elementary school and high school or transition to South Loop Elementary School.

The proposed re-assignment of NTA's boundary meets the criteria of the Chief Executive Officer's Guidelines for School Actions (Guidelines) because it is a proposal requested by parents or community members via the process to request proposals outlined in the Guidelines. Specifically, we have heard the request for this proposal from recommendations by public officials, parents, community members and community groups in the Near South area in the form of petitions, e-mail and statements at community meetings. This proposal is also consistent with the Guidelines because the resulting space utilization after the re-assignment boundary change will not exceed any affected schools' enrollment efficiency range as defined by CPS' Space Utilization Standards. Finally, the NTA students impacted by this proposed re-assignment boundary change are being provided the option to enroll at South Loop Elementary School, a higher performing school, as defined by the Guidelines.

If you would like more detail about the proposed re-assignment boundary change, please refer to the Draft Transition Plan that is included with this letter.



As a next step, CPS will hold two community meetings and one public hearing to hear further feedback on CPS' proposal (meeting information is below). Following the meetings and hearing, the Board of Education may vote on this proposal as early as February of 2018.

Public Comment on this Proposal

I invite you to share your feedback on this proposal during the following two community meetings and one public hearing noted below:

Community Meeting 1

January 9, 2018

6 to 8 p.m.

Illinois Institute of Technology
(Hermann Hall Auditorium)

3241 South Federal Street

Community Meeting 2

January 16, 2018

6 to 8 p.m.

Second Presbyterian Church

1936 South Michigan Avenue

Public Hearing

January 29, 2018

6 to 8:30 PM

CPS Central Office

42 West Madison Street

If you wish to comment at the community meetings or hearing, you must sign up to speak on the day of, at the designated location, beginning one hour before the designated start time and ending 30 minutes after the start of the meeting or hearing. You will have two minutes to speak, unless the hearing officer or meeting organizer provides an extension. The hearing will conclude at the stated end time or following the comments of the last person who has signed up to speak, whichever occurs first.

Thank you in advance for your feedback as we work to provide all Chicago Public School students with the high-quality education they deserve. After the community meetings and public hearing, I will review a written report from the hearing officer and at that time, I may recommend that the Board consider and approve the re-assignment boundary change of NTA.

Further Questions and Concerns:

All of this information can be found at CPS.edu/Transitions. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this proposal and the Draft Transition Plan, please call Chicago Public Schools at (773) 553-1500 or email Transitions@cps.edu.

Sincerely,

Forrest Claypool
Chief Executive Officer
Chicago Public Schools